



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 5

77 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD

CHICAGO, IL 60604-3590

NOV 20 2012

REPLY TO THE ATTENTION OF:

E-19J

Jeff Seefeldt
District Ranger
Lakewood-Laona Ranger District
Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest
15085 State Road 32
Lakewood, Wisconsin 54138

Re: Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Lakewood Southeast Project, Proposal to Implement Vegetation and Transportation Management Activities, Lakewood-Laona Ranger District, Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest, Oconto, Wisconsin - CEQ #20120326

Dear Mr. Seefeldt:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the above-mentioned project. Our comments are provided pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA Implementing Regulations (40 CFR 1500-1508) and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

The Draft EIS presents proposed actions to implement the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest 2004 Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and move forest resources toward the desired future conditions for the Management Areas (MA) located in the Lakewood Southeast project area. The primary project-specific needs are to manage vegetation, change road distribution, and improve wildlife populations. Proposed actions include timber harvest, plantings, and access management.

Based on our review of this document, we have assigned the Draft EIS a rating of "Lack of Objections" (LO). We find the action alternatives consistent with the Forest Plan. However, we recommend additional information about road density be included in the Final EIS, as discussed below. A summary of the rating system used in the evaluation of the document is enclosed.

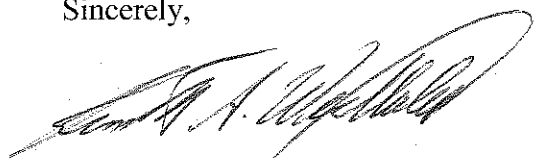
Road Density and Siting

EPA notes that Alternative 2 (the preferred alternative) meets most of the U.S. Forest Services's needs, except for road density reduction. The Draft EIS indicates that implementation of Alternative 3 would result in the lowest road density of the action alternatives.

Each of the proposed alternatives calls for both decommissioning of existing roads and construction of new, temporary roads. However, there are certain locations in the alternatives where new roads are proposed adjacent to roads which will be decommissioned. For example, the map titled: *Lakewood Southeast Project Alternative 2 Harvest and Road Actions Map B* includes the decommissioning of an existing road leading to stand 68-2, but also construction of a new road leading to the same stand. The Final EIS should indicate why certain areas are targeted for new road construction when there are existing roads nearby. Reconstructing, or, if necessary, widening existing roads would further reduce environmental impacts and should be considered as measures to address the proposed need, while further reducing environmental impacts. We look forward to seeing this information in the Final EIS.

We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft EIS and look forward to reviewing the Final EIS and Record of Decision. If you have any questions, please contact Elizabeth Poole of my staff at (312) 353-2087 or poole.elizabeth@epa.gov.

Sincerely,



Kenneth A. Westlake
Chief, NEPA Implementation Section
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance

Enclosure: Summary of Ratings Definitions

Cc: Marilee Houlter, District NEPA Coordinator
Jim McDonald, Regional Environmental Coordinator